Communications and 20.109

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Getting to know you -- Part 1
Two truths and a lie

☐ Write three statements about yourself, two of them true and one a lie.
Getting to know you -- Part 2
Letter to Atissa, Neal, and Linda

☐ What have been your experiences with scientific writing (e.g., lab reports, research articles, reviews)? With other forms of writing?

☐ What have been your experiences with oral presentations (whether scientific or not)?

☐ How would you describe yourself as a writer? As a public speaker?

☐ What are your writing/speaking goals for 20.109?

What were the steps in the writing process for a recent academic project?

1.
Modeling the process for trouble spots

**A Writer's Questions**

- What do I know about my topic?
- Why am I writing?
- Who are my readers?
- What do they know already about my topic?
- How is this task like others I have done?
- What structure works best for my topic?

**Episode 1: Planning**

**Episode 2: Drafting**

**Episode 4: Editing**

**Episode 3: Revising**

Good writers and composing strategies

**Independence Key**

1. **Declarative Knowledge**: Knowing what strategies are available
2. **Procedural Knowledge**: Knowing how to use a strategy.
3. **Conditional Knowledge**: Knowing how and when to use a strategy.

*The goal is to develop all three types of knowledge for each part of the writing process.*
Controlling the rhetoric of scientific writing

“the art of finding in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle).

Writing and the rhetorical triangle

Writers balance the relationship among themselves, the texts, their readers, and the context in which this balancing act occurs.
Courting the audience

“The April 1953 paper, then, is really just the initial move in a rhetorical strategy aimed at gaining and holding the attention of an audience. As such, it presumes an understanding of science as a human community in which neither facts nor ideas speak for themselves, and the attention of the audience must be courted.”

*Michael Halloran on Watson & Crick’s 1953 “The Structure of DNA”

Reality may complicate the triangle

Multiple purposes
- Explain
- Entertain
- Persuade
- Get an A

Multiple audiences
- Yourself
- Imagined reader
- Peers
- Instructors
Language enables writing and research

“Language, oral or written, is an expressive instrument through which we communicate what we have previously thought [or discovered]. It is also the reflective instrument through which we think, alone or with others, about what we are doing” (Paul Connolly).

Good MIT resources

The Mayfield Guide On-Line
http://www.mhhe.com/mayfieldpub/tsw/home.htm

MIT Writing and Communication Center
Room 12-132; 617/253-3090
Appointments can be made from
http://web.mit.edu/writing/
Writing resources on the 20.109 Wiki

http://openwetware.org/wiki/20.109%28S10%29